

NBC 5 Chicago, July 20, 2007

WHITING, Ind. -- Local lawmakers traveled by boat Friday, to the BP refinery in Whiting and they appealed to the EPA to stop the oil giant's plan to dump even more waste into the waters of Lake Michigan.

From the lake, it's hard to see where the wastewater comes out of the BP refinery in Whiting.

But if the \$3 billion expansion goes through as planned, it will out of a pipe buried under water hundreds of feet off shore.

Tenth District U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk organized this unauthorized boat tour of the area to give environmental groups and reporters a better idea of what almost 6,000 additional pounds of sludge and ammonia could do to Chicago's primary water source.

BP has won approval from both the EPA and the state of Indiana to increase the amount of pollutants it can legally dump in the lake. It has said there is not enough room to build additional pollution control equipment into the project -- something environmentalists doubt.

Already, petition drives are underway to get BP to change its mind, and members of Congress --including Kirk -- are considering legislation to ban lake dumping. But attorneys wonder if the legal options to stop this additional dumping may be limited.

Together with Democrat Daniel Lipinski, Kirk is proposing a ban on all lake dumping.

Ironically, the idea came not from this proposed expansion at the refinery, but instead from the city of Detroit Michigan, which dumps thousands of tons of untreated waste into the lake every year.

Under current laws and EPA regulations, that dumping and the additional dumping at BP are both legal.